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Security Council

Fifty-first Year

Provisional

3652nd Meeting
Monday, 15 April 1996, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Somavía	(Chile)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Nkgowe
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Germany	Mr. Eitel
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Queta
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Wibisono
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata
	Poland	Mr. Wlosowicz
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Gomersall
	United States of America	Mrs. Albright

Agenda

The situation in the occupied Arab territories

Letter dated 10 April 1996 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/257)

96-85415 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the occupied Arab territories

Letter dated 10 April 1996 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/257)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Colombia, Cuba, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Morocco, Norway, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Yaacobi (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Lamamra (Algeria), Mr. García (Colombia), Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Mr. Takahashi (Japan), Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan), Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait), Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon), Mr. Azwai (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. Razali (Malaysia), Mr. Snoussi (Morocco), Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway), Mr. Khan (Pakistan), Mr. Allagany (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic), Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia), Mr. Tanç (Turkey), Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) and Mr. Obadi (Yemen) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 12 April 1996 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which has been issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/1996/274 and reads as follows:

"I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, to participate in the current debate of the Security Council with regard to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the current debate in accordance with the rules of procedure and with previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 12 April 1996 from the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which reads as follows:

"In my capacity as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to request that I be invited to participate in the debate on the situation in the occupied Arab territories, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council."

On previous occasions, the Security Council has extended invitations to representatives of other United Nations bodies in connection with the consideration of matters on its agenda.

In accordance with past practice in this matter, I propose that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Ravan Farhadi, Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 12 April 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Guinea to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that the Security Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Engin A. Ansay, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, during the Council's discussion of the item entitled 'The situation in the occupied Arab territories'."

That letter has been issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/1996/277.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to His Excellency Mr. Ansay.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in response to the request contained in a letter dated 10 April 1996 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, document S/1996/257.

I wish also to draw the attention of members to document S/1996/235, which contains a letter dated 2 April 1996 addressed to the Secretary-General by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations.

The first speaker is the Permanent Observer of Palestine, on whom I now call.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me to express our congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are confident that you will lead the Security Council successfully and skilfully. I should like also to express my thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana, President of the Security Council last month.

At the outset, I wish to express our appreciation to the members of the fraternal Arab Group and to its Chairman for this month, the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates, for their request to convene this meeting of the Security Council in order to consider the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Further, I should like to express our appreciation to the members of the Security Council for responding to this request, as well as to all other Member States that have shown interest and concern with regard to the situation. I should like also to thank His Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the interest he has expressed and for his good offices in this regard, including his transmittal of the letter of His Excellency President Yasser Arafat to the Security Council, contained in document S/1996/233.

The Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, have been enduring a very difficult situation. Their daily suffering has increased and become unbearable because of a set of policies and measures adopted by Israel, the occupying Power, in several fields.

The first field involves Israeli policy and measures with regard to the movement of persons and goods within the Palestinian territory, as well as movement into and out of the territory. These policies and measures in reality represent a siege of the Palestinian territory and the strangulation of the Palestinian people and their economy. The policy has various aspects, including preventing or restricting movement between Palestinian cities and villages within the Palestinian territory itself, including some restrictions in the Gaza Strip. Another aspect is the division of the Palestinian territory as a consequence of Israel's non-compliance with the establishment of safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which, according to the 1993 Declaration of Principles, represent a single territorial unit. Another aspect is the imposition of restrictions on the entry of the Palestinian people into occupied East Jerusalem, despite the special status of that city as the religious, cultural and economic centre of the Palestinian people.

Yet another aspect of this Israeli policy is the closure of the Israeli border to the Palestinian people and to Palestinian goods, as well as the prevention of the entry of Israeli goods into the Palestinian territory or some parts of it. These restrictions have also been applied to goods destined for, or originating from, a third party.

The final aspect of this policy is the closure of the borders of the West Bank and Gaza with Jordan and Egypt respectively, or the imposition of serious restrictions on the movement of goods and persons across those borders.

The various aspects of this Israeli policy were presented in detail in the letter from the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/1996/235). It is clear that this policy goes far beyond preventing Palestinian workers from earning a daily living after the many long years of exploitation to which they were subjected by Israel in this regard. In truth, it represents the elimination of any possibility of creating a viable Palestinian economy, including preventing the development of external trade and a free market. Furthermore, this policy has amounted to isolating the Palestinian territory from the outside world, which has caused serious pain and suffering and has sometimes led to the death of ill individuals and to severe shortages of certain goods and basic necessities of life. In addition, these measures were taken by Israel unilaterally, without consultation with the Palestinian side, and they were illegally imposed by military means.

The second field involves a set of Israeli measures with multiple aspects, which began with the occupying Power's resumption of the practice of demolishing Palestinian homes and its threats to revert to deportation. It also includes several incidents of political assassination which have occurred in a number of places, including in the territory under the control of the Palestinian National Authority and the territories of other countries as well. Also among these measures are Israel's continued confiscation of Palestinian land, the continued construction of new bypass roads to serve Israeli settlements, and the expansion of these settlements, which all aim at the creation of more illegal facts on the ground.

The third field basically concerns Israel's non-compliance with some relevant provisions of the agreements reached between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Perhaps the most striking examples of this are Israel's failure to implement the redeployment of its forces from the city of Hebron, which was scheduled to take place by 28 March 1996; the continued detention and imprisonment of Palestinians in Israeli gaols, despite the agreements reached in this regard between the two parties; the failure to officially withdraw the Israeli military government and dissolve the civil administration following the inauguration of the elected Palestinian Legislative Council; and, as I have said, the failure to implement provisions concerning safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza to connect the Palestinian territory.

This briefly outlines the essence of the situation with regard to recent Israeli policies and measures against the Palestinian people. The intensity of these policies and measures has oscillated several times. However, in the last few weeks it has reached an unbearable level, which constitutes a very real threat to the overall fragile situation.

At this time, we wish to express our strong condemnation of all these policies and measures, on the basis that some of them violate the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is applicable to all the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. These include the collective punishment of our people. Some of them violate provisions of agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and they all constitute a violation of the spirit of peace. They threaten the peace process and the prospects for its continuation. The real issue is not the volume or intensity of these policies, which leads some to express satisfaction when their severity is lessened. The real issue is the mere existence of such policies and measures in principle and the necessity of putting an end to them once and for all, if we wish to be consistent with ourselves and with the peace process and its essence, and if we want to respect the contractual obligations entered into by the parties.

Some have said that these Israeli policies and measures are dictated by Israeli security requirements, particularly following the recent bombing attacks in Israel. We understand Israeli concerns in this regard. However, we do not agree with the diagnosis of the situation or with the remedy prescribed for it, and we reject the basis of these policies. Some of these measures have absolutely no relation to security considerations. Some were in place before the bombings, and others cannot be justified even from an Israeli security point of view.

We believe that what is more important is a political understanding of the matter. We believe that maintaining security should involve the security of all parties and that under no circumstances should one party take unilateral measures and impose them by force. We further believe that Israel cannot separate itself from Palestinian territory and at the same time impose on that territory isolation from the rest of the world, as if the territory and its people were its hostages. In other words, if Israel chooses separation, regardless of its reasons and despite its obligations and commitments, Israel should bear the consequences of that decision and accept complete political separation at the same time. In any event, the basis should remain commitment to the agreements

between the two parties, to international law and to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Some have been saying that these Israeli measures and policies are connected to the upcoming Israeli election and their complexities. We are cognizant of the importance of the elections and the various sensitivities in this regard and, of course, we have our political preference: a preference for the continuation of the peace process and for stability in the region. However, we cannot accept that the suffering of our people should become a commodity in the feverish Israeli election period or at any other time. Once again, what is crucial here is basic commitment to the agreements reached between the two parties, to international law and to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Now what of the Palestinian position? Since the Palestinian side made the peace process a strategic option it has taken a clear position against all acts of terror and violence. The Palestinian side has expressed its clear condemnation of the recent bombing attacks in Israel and of all similar operations. Likewise, the Palestinian side has condemned terrorist acts committed by Israelis, such as the massacres at al-Haram al-Ibrahimi and at al-Haram al-Quds al-Sharif, and the assassination of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The Palestinian National Authority has chosen a clear course towards securing Palestinian national interests in this regard. This entails the maintenance of security, order and the rule of law, and the barring of all illegal groups from operating in its territories. The Palestinian Authority has taken definitive measures to guarantee the implementation of this course, within the resources available to it. The Authority is doing this based on overwhelming popular support, which was crystallized in the historic election process conducted by the Palestinian people in January of this year, during which our people voiced their political choices clearly in favour of the peace process and gave a vote of confidence and constitutional legitimacy to the Palestinian leadership. We will fulfil our duties in exchange for our people's confidence in order to fulfil our contractual obligations and to preserve the peace process towards the achievement of our national goals in building the independent Palestinian State with Holy Jerusalem as its capital.

At the same time, we wish to stress our belief that a complete and absolute solution to the problem of extremism and terrorism is linked to bringing an end to the unfair and unjust practices against our people, to the achievement of further political progress in the peace process and to improvements in the living conditions and the difficult economic situation of our people.

The peace process has indeed generated several significant achievements, and has brought many important changes to the landscape of the region. We believe that we should work to maintain these achievements and that we must not allow their destruction or the interruption of the continuity of the process, whether as a result of actions by those forces working against peace or as a result of policies and measures which are not compatible with this peace and its essence, and which cause a great deal of harm.

We came to the Security Council because we believe that the Council bears responsibility towards the situation in the Middle East and towards the question of Palestine, as a part of its permanent and continuing responsibility for international peace and security. We believe that the Council should not be prevented from assuming its responsibilities and duties in this regard. The engagement of the Security Council cannot but serve the goal of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It cannot but support the ongoing peace process in the region. This would be in the same direction as other efforts such as the Summit of Peacemakers held at Sharm El Sheikh.

We had hoped that the Security Council would be permitted to express an official position with regard to the situation in the Palestinian territory. Nevertheless, despite the lack of such an achievement, the very convening of an official meeting of the Council is a clear indication of the serious concern of the international community with regard to the situation and its negative impact on the peace process.

It has been our duty, in the light of continued Israeli policies and measures against our people and our inability to change the prevailing situation through the available mechanisms provided for in the agreements between the two parties, to bring before the Council, and through the Council before the international community as a whole, the true picture of the dangerous situation prevailing in our land and to ask for help in bringing an immediate end to this situation, in support of right and justice and in support of the peace process and its continuation.

I cannot end this statement without mentioning the continuing and escalating Israeli aggression against Lebanon, which is causing great suffering to the fraternal Lebanese people in addition to the great harm it is

causing to the Middle East peace process. We condemn the Israeli attacks on Lebanese villages and cities, including Beirut, the capital. We reiterate our expression of solidarity with the Lebanese people in their steadfastness and determination to bring the occupation of their land to an end. We reaffirm the need for the Security Council to bring an immediate end to the Israeli aggression, thus helping towards the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 425 (1978).

The President *(interpretation from Spanish):* I thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for the kind words he addressed to me.

Before calling on the next speaker, I wish to inform the Council that I have just received a letter from the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Takht-Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran) took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

The next speaker is the representative of Israel, on whom I now call.

Mr. Yaacobi (Israel): At the outset, Sir, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. I would also like to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana, for the very able manner in which he conducted the affairs of the Council last month.

May I say that I am very sorry that the Observer of Palestine used this forum, at this meeting, to react on the Lebanon issue, to which I understand that the Security Council will specifically devote its evening session. I will not respond to what he said on that matter. I will save my remarks for the evening meeting.

During a span of eight terrifying days in February and March of this year, Islamic fundamentalist terrorists from the West Bank and Gaza perpetrated four separate suicide bombings within Israel. These despicable crimes left 59 men, women and children dead and an additional 200 injured. As a direct result of these murderous acts of terror, the Government of Israel imposed a closure of Israel to residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The rationale behind the closure was to restore a sense of security to the Israeli people by preventing armed terrorists from infiltrating Israel in order to wreak further havoc with the express intention of derailing the peace process and killing innocent Israelis.

Let me make it very clear: the closure is not a form of collective punishment against the Palestinian population. It is a measure enacted solely to ensure security for the people of Israel. We really experienced that easing the closure preceded the terrorist actions which took place in the urban centres of Israel. The connection between the easing of the closure and those terrorist activities was very clear and very obvious to everyone who watched the scene.

Israel is aware of the toll that the closure has taken on the residents of the West Bank and Gaza and we are sensitive to the plight of the Palestinian population. But this, for the time being, is a must to protect the people of Israel and to save the peace.

In recent days, the Government of Israel has undertaken measures to gradually ease the closure. Currently, 7,000 workers from Gaza are permitted entry into Israel each day. Since 8 April, Palestinians 45 years of age and older have been able to cross into Israel to earn their living. In addition, development projects initiated in Gaza by Israel and other international donors continue to employ over 25,000 local labourers. Lately, the passage of goods has been greatly eased both between Gaza and Israel and between Israel and the West Bank.

We know that there are still terrorists at large in Gaza and other areas. The Palestinian Authority has gained self-rule over Gaza and most of the West Bank population. Following the successful elections there, we believe that it is the Authority's responsibility to root out the terrorist cancer. Those people are the enemies of the peace which serves the future of all of us. We are indeed encouraged by the efforts undertaken lately by the Palestinian Authority to curb the terrorist groups within the areas under its jurisdiction. Israel cannot lower its defences in the face of terrorists whose stated aim is to kill innocent people and to destroy the peace process. We will continue to pursue peace and security for our people. At the same time, we will fight the dark forces of

terrorism and fanaticism. We will not allow them to destroy what we have worked so hard to achieve.

Unfortunately, the terrorists are supported by several foreign Governments that have time and again shown their opposition to peace through their words and deeds; one of them was just invited to take a seat at the side of the Security Council Chamber. The international community must unite in its effort to isolate these terrorist regimes.

Israel is encouraged by the support of the international community in this respect. Last month, at the Summit of the Peacemakers in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 29 world leaders, including leaders from many Arab States, pledged their commitment to enhance the peace process, to promote regional security and to combat terror.

All of us, Palestinians, Israelis and others, must be patient and look beyond our immediate hardships in order to achieve our long-term goals of peace and security.

Despite the terrorist attacks, we shall continue to work towards enhancing the peace process and towards implementing the agreement which we have reached with the Palestinians.

Additional resolutions here will merely serve to further complicate the peace process. Only by confronting the enemies of peace can we ensure that the peace process will move forward. I call upon all the members of the Council to do what really serves the building of a new order in the Middle East and to contribute to a better future for us all.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I thank the representative of Israel for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Security Council is meeting today to consider measures whose inherent dangers go beyond Israel's siege against the Palestinian people, and whose effects add another to a series of Israeli violations of the rules of international law, as well as of Security Council resolutions and commitments entered into by the Israeli Government itself.

The situation is even more serious in view of the fact that the Security Council will later today consider the matter of Israel's new and repeated attacks against Lebanon. Egypt calls on Israel to put an end to those attacks and to withdraw forthwith from all Lebanese territories, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Although Israel justifies such measures on the pretext of safeguarding its security, a quick overview of the Israeli measures listed in the Palestinian complaint to the Security Council belies those justifications.

First, Israel has imposed limits on the freedom of movement inside the Palestinian territory. Israeli forces have surrounded some regions and prevented Palestinians from moving between cities, villages and towns.

Secondly, Israel has imposed further restrictions on entry to occupied East Jerusalem.

Thirdly, Palestinian borders are closed to Palestinian people and Palestinian goods from the West Bank and Gaza; no Israeli goods are allowed to enter the Palestinian territory or some parts of it. Furthermore, restrictions have been imposed on the movement of third-country nationals between Israel and Gaza.

Fourthly, Israel has closed the borders of the West Bank and Gaza with Jordan and Egypt, respectively, preventing the movement of people and goods that are imported legally by Palestinian businessmen. All links have been cut between the Palestinian territory and the outside world. It has been truly isolated from neighbouring countries.

This closure does great harm to the Palestinian economy. It is imposed, in most cases, against people and goods, even those goods going to or coming from third parties. This has resulted in great suffering and difficulties for a large sector of the population, particularly those Palestinian workers who rely on their jobs in Israel as the only source of support for their families.

During years of occupation Israel used Palestinian workers as a source of cheap labour in order to double the gains of the Israeli economy. By preventing those workers from reaching their jobs now, Israel is shirking its responsibilities until a Palestinian economy can be built.

Furthermore, such Israeli practices run counter to Israel's obligations as the occupying Power, under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, as

well as under Security Council resolutions and other international agreements.

Furthermore, such Israeli policies undermine the efforts of those calling for peaceful negotiations as a means to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict - particularly between Israel and Palestinians - and strengthens the hand of those calling for extremism, violence and terrorism on both sides.

The international community, represented in the Security Council, is called upon today more than ever before to reaffirm its position on the illegitimacy of the Israeli measures. The silence of the Security Council in the face of such measures would undoubtedly raise great questions as to the legitimacy of the measures and standards applied by the Security Council in dealing with different types of aggression and would point to double standards in the application of such rules and norms. In the end, that will weaken the ability of the Security Council to deal with any potential act of violence in the future.

In calling upon Israel to put an end to those measures that run counter to its commitments as the occupying Power - and are in violation of its agreements with the Palestinian side, Egypt is not underestimating the threat of terrorism or the need for us to consolidate our efforts in the face of terrorism.

However, we do not believe that demolishing homes and starving innocent Palestinians are ways to defend security. We believe that the ideal means to achieve security for all parties in the Middle East is to push the peace process forward towards a just and comprehensive peace and to help the countries of the region cooperate in order to raise the living standards of their peoples.

The Summit of Peacemakers, held at Sharm El Sheikh under the co-chairmanship of Presidents Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Bill Clinton of the United States, reaffirmed this essential interlinkage between peace, security and economic progress. In the final statement of the Summit, the two Presidents, laid out several steps designed to achieve three essential objectives: supporting the Israeli-Palestinian agreements; supporting continuing negotiations towards a comprehensive settlement; and working together to promote security and stability in the region through effective means, cooperation and further assistance. The Presidents severely condemned all acts of terrorism, whatever the motive and whoever the perpetrator, including the most recent terrorist attacks in Israel. They denounced such acts of terrorism and expressed their firm intention to work against them. They called on all Governments to join in that condemnation and in their stand against terrorist acts.

Despite the positive developments in the Middle East since the Madrid peace conference, we acknowledge the existence of threats to peace efforts in the Middle East, including those posed by terrorist acts. A number of Palestinian extremists have exploded bombs which have killed dozens of Israeli civilians. Before those attacks an Israeli extremist assassinated the late Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and before that, an Israeli extremist was responsible for a massacre at the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron. All those offences remind us that the enemies of peace are prepared to use the utmost violence to achieve their ends. We must agree to reject such means and to take all legitimate measures against them.

While renewing our condemnation of such terrorist acts, we cannot accept the exploitation of those terrorist crimes by one side in order to impose collective punishment against the other. We call upon the Israeli Government to abide by the commitments it made with the Palestinian side. We call upon it to respect the agreed timetable to end the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories and to be more positive in negotiations with both Syria and Lebanon.

Perhaps the strongest response to those trying to kill peace in the Middle East is to accelerate the achievement of that peace. Violence does not lead to peace; it produces further violence. Therefore this vicious circle must be broken. That requires wisdom, courage and far-sightedness by all.

The Palestinian and Israeli sides succeeded in achieving a historic reconciliation through the Declaration of Principles signed on 13 September 1993, in which it was agreed to take specific steps towards a peaceful settlement in the dispute between them. The settlement was based on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories under resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as on the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people. The Middle East has begun to move from a period of war and struggle towards a new stage which promises a just and comprehensive peace between the peoples of this important region of the world. This transitional period places further burdens on all the parties concerned with the well-being and stability of the peoples of the region.

Let us not believe that the continuing progress of the peace process will be automatic or that it is inevitable. Indeed, we believe that all parties concerned must give greater impetus to negotiations. The wide support for the peace process has until now been linked in the minds of all concerned with expectations of regaining land and rights, an end to bloodshed, and the beginning of regional cooperation towards arms control and the development of the economies of the States of the region in order to raise the living standards of the people. Such noble objectives must be obtained before true peace can prevail. Consequently, the Security Council must, in its deliberations today, deal with this problem as a source of destabilization in the security of the entire Middle East region.

The delegation of Egypt believes that the Security Council will consider all aspects of the issue, especially the consequences of the latest Israeli measures, within the framework of the peace process. The long-term repercussions of the breakdown of the peace process may lead to violence taking over from the logic of peace and cooperation.

Finally, the delegation of Egypt reaffirms that a just and comprehensive peace will not be achieved unless all parties respect their international commitments in good faith. The Security Council's debate today will undoubtedly send a clear message to the Israeli Government about the need to end all measures which jeopardize the rights of the Palestinian people so that the peace process can continue progressing towards a just and comprehensive peace, which all peoples of the region are searching for.

Mr. Nkgowe (Botswana): The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed in Washington, D.C., on 13 September 1993, and the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip signed in Washington, D.C., on 28 September 1995, made Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization partners in the search for durable peace in the Middle East. These agreements constitute the foundation for peace and are an attempt to fulfil the common desire of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to end years of bitter confrontation and establish, in its place, a new era of mutual recognition, peaceful coexistence and cooperation. These are noble objectives which enjoy the strong political and moral support of Botswana. We urge the Government of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority to remain unwavering in their commitment to the peace process.

Recent events have shown that it takes courage and bravery to make peace. It is those who do not fear living in peace with their former enemies and neighbours who will be ready to walk the extra mile in pursuit of peace. It is obvious — at times painfully so — that the road to peace in the Middle East has been and will be fraught with many obstacles, pitfalls and dangers. There are still many enemies of peace in that region: assassins, suicide bombers, fanatics — you name them — who are bent on the use of force where others have opted for peaceful coexistence and the establishment of good-neighbourly relations as the best path to a prosperous and mutually beneficial future between the peoples of Israel and Palestine. It is clear that the overwhelming majority of the peoples of Israel and Palestine fall into the latter category. They should therefore derive strength and fortitude from each other and work tirelessly in the face of all odds for the fulfilment of their hopes and aspirations for a better tomorrow.

They cannot afford to be panicked by threats or to surrender to the machinations of the enemies of peace. The peace that so many have yearned for, for so long, cannot be allowed to unravel at the point of its consummation due to the unguided activities of a few. The difficulties facing the peace process are truly undeniable. Tackling them requires unity of purpose and commitment by the peacemakers.

Botswana recognizes the limited but difficult choices before the Government of Israel to guarantee the safety and security of its people. The brutal terrorist attacks which took place in Jerusalem on 3 March and in Tel Aviv on 4 March, which claimed several lives and caused colossal suffering to many people, are a grim reality that the Government had to contend with and respond to in the best manner it saw fit. These heinous crimes could only have been perpetrated by the enemies of peace against innocent and unsuspecting civilians. The peace-loving people of Palestine shared the pain of their Israeli brethren. They honestly commiserated and sympathized with the people of Israel following these horrid and merciless suicide bomb attacks. They understood and fully appreciated that such despicable acts were not directed only at the people of Israel but at the Palestinians as well, because the disruption of the peace process could be nothing but a dagger pointed at the people of Palestine.

My delegation has noted the letters dated 1 April 1996 (S/1996/233) and 2 April 1996 (S/1996/235) concerning the impact of the measures taken by Israel

against the people of the Palestinian territories. The measures adopted by the Government of Israel are clearly a blunt instrument which does not distinguish between the guilty and the innocent. They are a form of collective punishment which hurts the peace-loving people of Palestine, against whom they should not have been aimed in the first place. No impression of desperation or panic should be created, because that is exactly what the enemies of the peace process hope to see and work hard to achieve.

It is therefore a matter of profound importance that the Government of Israel do everything it possibly can to avoid alienating the majority of the Palestinian people, who, in free and fair elections, recently expressed their desire for peace by reaffirming their support for the Palestine Liberation Organization, the partner of Israel in the peace process in the Middle East. The capacity of the border closures to damage the peace process, poison the political atmosphere and reduce the pace of the implementation of the Agreements should not be underestimated. The safety and security interests of the Israeli people should be weighed against the human rights and welfare of the Palestinian people as well as the overall objective of establishing a durable peace.

It is important that in all its efforts to guarantee the genuine security interests of its people, Israel should at the same time avoid taking measures which would harm the spirit and letter of the historic and solemn agreements it entered into with the Palestine Liberation Organization. Equally, the Palestine National Authority should do everything it can to help stem the tide of terrorist attacks against the State of Israel. No effort should be spared to preserve and advance the peace process.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): Like all the other members of the Council, the Republic of Korea has consistently supported the Middle East peace process, which began with the 1991 Peace Conference on the Middle East in Madrid, on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We have always held the view that the progress achieved jointly by the Israelis and the Palestinians for the peace and common prosperity of the region is undeniable proof that any regional dispute, no matter how deep-seated and complex, can eventually be solved through dialogue between the parties directly concerned. For a country like the Republic of Korea, which has itself suffered from the painful division of its land for almost half a century, the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue has also served as a positive example of confidence-building measures and of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Although the Middle East peace process suffered a devastating blow last year with the tragic loss of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the year 1996 has begun on a note of optimism, most notably in the successful conclusion of the conference on assistance to the Palestinians, held on 9 January in Paris, where the Republic of Korea announced its decision to provide additional grant aid of $3 million beyond the $12 million already offered for rehabilitation projects of the Palestinian people. Within the region itself, the Palestinians achieved another milestone in the quest for the expansion of self-rule and peaceful coexistence with the Israelis by holding elections of the Palestinian Council and President of the Palestinian Authority on 20 January in a peaceful and democratic manner. It is due to these very encouraging signs that the international community has been filled with hope that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region is within reach.

Regrettably, a series of terrorist attacks in Israel on 25 and 26 February and on 3 and 4 March sent a dark cloud over the region. Fully recognizing that these acts of cowardice were intended to derail the peace process, all the members in this Chamber echoed their support for peace and called on the parties to consolidate their efforts and increase their cooperation in curbing violence and combating terrorism. Outside the Council, the international community advocated a similar position by holding the Summit of Peacemakers on 13 March in Sharm El Sheikh on the Sinai peninsula. Participants in the Summit expressed their firm support for the peace process and issued a strong condemnation of terrorism.

Despite the international community's hope that the Middle East peace process would continue intact, we note that the Israeli policy adopted in response to the terrorist attacks has adversely impacted the lives of Palestinians. In particular, Israeli measures such as the closure of its borders with the West Bank and Gaza have caused enormous hardship for the Palestinian people and have stirred international concern. The socio-economic problems resulting from Israeli countermeasures should be resolved as soon as possible, not only from a humanitarian perspective, but also for the sake of the peace process itself. After all, it is the obvious goal of the extremists to fan the flames of hatred among Palestinians against Israel and the peace process.

Therefore, the current situation of the region demands a most cautious and balanced approach. While terrorism should be prevented, the economic well-being of the Palestinians should be duly considered as well.

Although the international community should encourage the pursuit of such a solution, primarily to preserve the peace process, the task itself is in the hands of the parties directly concerned. Fortunately, there is an array of legal frameworks to support this end, particularly the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 1993 and all subsequent agreements, including the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1995. But ultimately, it is the wisdom, courage and patience of the Israelis and Palestinians alike which will enable them to surmount the daunting challenges before them. As the problems facing the two peoples are man-made, so too can the solution be forged among these two parties. Given that both Israel and the PLO have a crucial stake in the continuation of the peace process, the spirit of compromise and cooperation must be revived by accommodating in a most balanced manner the economic well-being of the Palestine people and the security interests of Israel.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to appeal once again to both Israelis and Palestinians to move beyond the bloodshed and suffering of the past by implementing faithfully and promptly the international commitments they freely entered into.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Government of Israel closed its borders with the West Bank and Gaza at the beginning of March. This has affected the normal lives of the Palestinian people and caused serious problems for the economy of Palestine, thus violating the national interests of the Palestinian people.

The international community is deeply concerned, and the Government and the people of China share that concern. In our view, the national interests of the Palestinian people should be respected and safeguarded. We hope that the Israeli Government, on the basis of the overall interests of peace in the Middle East, will lift the closure as soon as possible so that the process of Palestinian autonomy can proceed smoothly, allowing the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza to resume their normal economic life.

We are deeply shocked by the repeated and large-scale terrorist bombing attacks that have taken place in Israel since February. We wish to extend our sympathy and condolences to the innocent victims. China opposes all forms of terrorism. In our view, terrorism is a threat to the lives and security of the people concerned. It is also a threat to international peace and security. All terrorists, therefore, must be brought to justice. We believe that there should be no difference in this respect between Israel and the Arab countries of the Middle East.

In our view, in opposing terrorist acts as in dealing with other international problems, it is necessary to observe the norms of international relations and international law. In particular, there should be no violation of the sovereignty, security or fundamental interests of other countries. We believe that the sovereignty and security of all countries in the Middle East, including Israel, should be respected and safeguarded. But at the same time, no one should link terrorism with the Arab countries and peoples, much less take blind action against innocent populations on the pretext of opposing terrorism. We hope that all parties concerned will join forces and strive for the early achievement of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, promote the economic development of the region and eliminate the root causes of terrorism.

At present, the peace process in the Middle East is at a critical juncture. The parties concerned must not only implement comprehensively and effectively the agreements already reached, but they must also actively consolidate the results already achieved to overcome any interference and prevent reversals or regressions. We hope that all parties concerned will exercise restraint and continue to create the necessary conditions to further promote progress in the peace process in the Middle East.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before I call on the next speaker, I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Senegal, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Diagné (Senegal) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

Mrs. Albright (United States of America): The United States regrets that this discussion of Israel's

closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is taking place. It has been our view — and that of many other members — that such a discussion cannot help the peace process. It can only polarize that already difficult situation and distract us from the focus of our real challenges: how to combat terror, guarantee security, ease the economic dislocation of Palestinians and pursue the process of peacemaking.

The international community has responded aggressively to those challenges. Twenty-nine world leaders, including 13 from the Middle East and others from non-regional supporters of the peace process, convened at Sharm El Sheikh for a summit meeting co-sponsored by President Mubarak and President Clinton. Participants at the summit expressed their full support for the peace process and issued a strong condemnation of terrorism. They also agreed to develop a plan to fight terrorism with all available means. The positive tone set by that summit has already been reinforced by a meeting of experts in Washington, where, in addition to exploring measures to combat terror, a package of steps to begin to ease the suffering and hardships of Palestinians was announced. This is positive action — action designed to foster unity among those countries that want to combat terrorism, support Israel and the Palestinians, and preserve the peace process.

This is where we should be focusing our efforts: on seeking ways to combat those who would destroy the peace process and prevent Arabs and Israelis from achieving further progress. Suicide bombers should be seen for what they are: not only as murderers of people but also as those who want to kill the peace process. The terrorism posed by Hamas is as much a threat to the Palestinians as it is to Israel. The Government of Israel has taken measures to confront the terrorist threat and to protect its citizens, and the Palestinian Authority is grappling with this challenge. This body should not be engaging in a divisive rhetorical debate when there is so much work to do in all these areas.

We regret the economic hardship and suffering of Palestinians caused by the recent Hamas terror attacks and the measures Israel has taken to deal with this threat. We call on the international community to do all it can to alleviate those economic hardships. We commend the efforts of those countries and organizations which have worked overtime to come up with ideas and funding to help the Palestinians cope with the current difficulties. We also acknowledge that the Government of Israel has already taken steps to ease the current situation.

In this regard we take note of the recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee of the donors that met in Brussels on 12 April. That meeting outlined several key steps, including emergency job creation for Palestinians and project development, and outlined a strategy to mobilize the necessary resources to support those efforts. This will not be an easy effort, and there are no quick fixes. Both Israel and the Palestinians must rise to the challenge. Palestinians must do all they can to continue to root out terror; Israel, consistent with its security needs, must do everything it can to ease economic hardships for Palestinians. And together they must move to restore momentum to the process of implementation of their agreements. It is imperative that we lend them all our support.

This Council's sole objective must be to aid and support all those efforts. Rather than engaging in endless debate here in New York, we should recognize that the real answer to extremist terror and violence lies in the pursuit of the peace process by the parties themselves and in the achievement of a comprehensive peace. This is our goal, and my Government will do everything in its power to bring this about.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): We are alarmed at the situation which prevails in the autonomous Palestinian territory as a result of actions by the Israeli authorities, including steps to effect the administrative closure of those territories, which has led to a serious deterioration of the situation of the Palestinian population. This dangerous turn of events threatens the further development of the peace process, which has now reached a particularly crucial and delicate stage.

We decisively condemn acts of terrorism perpetrated in Israel by extremist groups, as a result of which dozens of peaceful inhabitants have been killed.

Russia was an active participant in the recent Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm El Sheikh and fully supports the statement adopted there, aimed at strengthening international cooperation in combatting terrorism, including terrorism in the Middle East. As we see it, the main task is to maintain the momentum of the peace process, since this has a decisive impact on resolving the problems that give rise, *inter alia*, to manifestations of extremism. We call upon the parties to refrain from any action which would exacerbate the situation and destroy the atmosphere of businesslike cooperation between them.

The sponsors of the peace process, together with other influential members of the international community, including donor countries, have been making strenuous efforts to normalize the situation and to promote the resumption of the process of Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation, taking into account the interests and concerns of both sides. We attach high priority to improving the socio-economic conditions in the Palestinian territories and the implementation of the Interim Agreement.

It has been the constant policy of the Russian Federation to promote progress in the Middle East peace process. We made considerable efforts to get the parties to reach the agreements that made it possible for the Madrid Conference to be organized and for direct talks to be launched. At the same time, we would like to recall that an understanding was reached at the time that the most difficult and delicate issues relating to the Arab-Israeli settlement, including the matter of Jerusalem, would be taken up at a somewhat later stage in the talks. In this context, we believe it is important that Israel should give up its tough position on the question of Palestinian autonomy. At the same time, we would like once again to make it abundantly clear that nothing can justify terrorism.

Experience indicates that the problems in the way of a peace settlement cannot be resolved through unilateral actions which affect the most sensitive aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. For its part, the Russian Federation intends to continue its efforts to normalize the situation and to bring about prompt Arab-Israeli reconciliation.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): Today's meeting of the Security Council, the convening of which was supported by France, must, in our view, pursue an essential aim: to support the peace process in the Middle East.

We can all see that this process is passing through a very difficult period, marked by the recent attacks that took place in Israel. These attacks have led the international community to mobilize. The States which met at Sharm El Sheikh expressed both their condemnation of terrorism and their determination to continue to build peace.

We understand the anguish of the Israeli authorities and their firm determination to ensure the safety of the population and to reassure it after the trauma of recent months. It is, however, essential that the scope and duration of the measures taken do not penalize the Palestinians to such an extent that their confidence in rapprochement and peace may be shattered for some time to come.

The peace process cannot coexist with violence and insecurity, and this is the reasoning, no doubt, of the terrorists who try to interrupt it. It cannot be pursued unless both populations, Israeli and Palestinian, believe that the process will enable them to coexist in peace. It is the progress of the Palestinian identity which will allow for the final elimination of terrorist threats which feed on isolation, bitterness and frustration. Security can be born only of mutual recognition and of a gradual building of trust.

France has unreservedly condemned the terrorist acts recently committed in Israel. It calls on the Palestinian Authority to pursue its efforts to fight those who commit such acts. It regrets that some of the measures taken by Israel, particularly because of the drastic restrictions on freedom of movement and the destabilizing effects on the Palestinian Authority's budget, have created a very difficult economic and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories. It notes that some of these measures disregard the spirit, and at times, the letter of the Interim Agreement of 28 September 1995. These measures give rise to reactions of a lack of understanding, of discouragement, of rancour. One must know how to regain the path of trust.

Otherwise, the well-known, hateful cycle of violence, repression and terrorism will commence. And this chain of events is felt well beyond a given act or the initial situation. Today we see a daunting example of this in the successive acts of violence levelled alternately against the populations of northern Israel and of Lebanon, whose population is now being sorely tried by the current confrontation.

France deplores this cycle of violence and suffering. It calls on all parties to exercise restraint. It reiterates its conviction that a just and lasting peace guaranteeing the security of Israel and the sovereignty of Lebanon must involve the implementation of resolution 425 (1978). In the interim, all acts of violence and retaliation must cease.

For the goal shared by all the parties, and which the international community should encourage, is to resume, without delay, the process leading to a just and global peace. This requires a restoration of trust. France therefore hopes that security measures, which are necessary, will be modified so that the Palestinian

population is not collectively punished and so that it will return to the path of the peace process.

As the President of the French Republic very recently recalled, addressing a group of students at Cairo University:

> "The commitments which have been reached must be fulfilled; the timetable that has been set must be observed; the peace process cannot stop midway".

Mr. Eitel (Germany): I should like to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting regarding the agenda item "The situation in the occupied Arab territories". We, of course, support what Italy will say on behalf of the European Union. To that I would like to add the following.

The situation in the Middle East had remarkably improved after Oslo and Madrid. Deeply rooted hostility affecting the whole Middle East region had given way to an effective peace process. This process has already yielded results that would have been unimaginable not so long ago. Recent events remind us, however, that the peace process is not yet all-inclusive, and that it continues to be threatened by terrorism.

At the same time, it is obvious that lasting stability in the Palestinian territories requires the genuine support of the local population. It is only natural that they want to see concrete improvements as regards their own living conditions. Concrete successes in this regard will lead to ever greater dynamics for the peace process and will successfully discourage terrorism and extremism aimed at derailing what has been achieved with so many sacrifices and efforts over the past years.

Terrorism has taken a particularly heavy toll on Israel. In numerous, horrible terrorist attacks the lives of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and of many — too many — innocent civilians have been taken by enemies of peace. We feel deep sympathy for the people of Israel mourning these losses, and we understand Israeli security needs.

At the same time, we are concerned about reports of economic hardship in the Palestinian territories. The security measures imposed by Israel lead to economic losses totalling several million dollars per day. They place a heavy burden on a civilian population that in recent elections endorsed the peace process by a wide margin.

My Government fully agrees with and actively contributed to the results of the summit meeting held in Sharm El Sheikh on 13 March 1996, which had the objectives of enhancing the peace process, promoting security and combating terror. Among other things, the participants of this summit meeting decided, and I quote:

> "To support the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, the continuation of the negotiating process and to politically and economically reinforce it, to enhance the security situation for both, with special attention to the current and pressing economic needs of the Palestinians". *(S/1996/238, annex)*

In the light of this, we strongly welcome the efforts made by the Palestinian authorities to combat terrorism and to prevent the territory they control from being used for terrorist attacks against Israel.

We also welcome Israeli decisions over the last few weeks to ease parts of the measures imposed on the Palestinian territories. We feel that these should be followed by more and further-reaching decisions to ease the blockade, and that Israel should reconsider the other measures that have been imposed.

We call upon all parties concerned to use maximum restraint and to stand against any escalation of violence. All provisions of international law must be respected, including common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

Many decades of confrontation and public condemnation, including through United Nations organs, did not change the situation in the Middle East. A few years of sincere negotiations have made all the difference. Therefore, this is the time for supporting the peace process, the time for encouraging Israel and the Palestinian authorities to cooperate in ending economic hardship and bringing prosperity and enhanced security to their peoples, and the time for calling upon those who are not yet participating in this process to join in the pursuit of peace, prosperity and security for the whole Middle East region.

Germany has contributed considerably to the economic development of the Palestinian territories and will continue to do so.

Mr. Gomersall (United Kingdom): We agree with the representative of Israel that the origin of the current setback to the situation in the West Bank and Gaza lies in the murderous attacks carried out by Hamas terrorists in Jerusalem a few weeks ago.

The United Kingdom condemns terrorism unreservedly. We have always recognized and supported Israel's right to and the need for security. This is very clear, and is recognized by this Council, whose resolution 242 (1967) declared the right of all countries in the region to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats and acts of force. Israel has the right to protect itself against Hamas bombers. The defence of its citizens is any Government's first priority. But security and economic stability in Gaza and the West Bank are two sides of the same coin.

The United Kingdom has worked hard with others in the international community to support Palestinian economic development. Serious and sudden unemployment and loss of revenue to the Palestinian Authority have raised levels of poverty to alarming levels and pose political challenges for the authorities by increasing the credibility of extremists.

We regret the fact that more access could not be given to Palestinians to the Holy Places over Easter, and on Fridays to the Al-Aqsa mosque. We support the right of access to the Holy Places for members of all religions.

The United Kingdom view remains that the status of Jerusalem remains to be determined and that nothing should be done to prejudice the outcome of the forthcoming negotiations.

We believe it is also important that members of the Palestinian Council should be allowed freely to attend meetings of that Council. We believe stability rests on the proper functioning of Palestinian democracy. And we are concerned at the continuing restrictions on Palestinians seeking medical care.

We welcome the measures which the Government of Israel has so far taken to ease the closure, and hope that these can be further amplified, in respect particularly of permitting workers to enter Israel and of easing the export and transit of goods. Facilities for Palestinian exports to Jordan and Egypt should be expedited and increased. We trust that ways will be found to do this without risking Israel's security. Measures without a clear security function or where humanitarian concerns outweigh security needs should be avoided.

Above all, as every speaker has stressed today, my Government believes that the peace process must continue. In the end peace will bring great benefits to Palestinians and Israelis alike. We expect all parties to fulfil the commitments they have made under, for example, the Interim Agreement and the tripartite action plan. The Palestinian Covenant should be amended as required under the Interim Agreement. Israel's right to exist must be asserted by all parties to the peace agreement. But also, Israeli redeployment should continue as specified in the Interim Agreement. Final status talks should begin, as intended under the agreements, by the end of May.

At this difficult time, the United Kingdom will continue to extend its encouragement and full support to the Israel Government and the Palestinian Authority in order to keep the peace process alive and to defeat its enemies. We are determined that these events should not deflect either Party from the efforts necessary to secure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

Mr. Martínez-Blanco (Honduras) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Honduras has always supported efforts towards a just and lasting peace, guaranteeing security and stability in the Middle East region. We have always considered that full compliance with the agreements reached between the Palestinian people and the Government of Israel is essential to achieve peace between Arabs and Israelis.

For this reason we view with just concern the present situation in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip caused by Israel's closure of borders in those areas.

The Government of Honduras condemns and laments the terrorist acts committed by Hamas activists in Jerusalem and Ashkelon on 25 February 1996, and against the Dizengoff Centre on 4 March 1996.

However, we are concerned that following those attacks measures have been adopted that are detrimental to the well-being and the economic viability of the people of Palestine.

My delegation believes that the complete closure of the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is an unprecedented measure. Because of it thousands of persons are confined to cities and villages; they have lost free access to their jobs, to food, to medical care and to schools: the situation is becoming a real crisis.

One cannot disregard the impact of this dangerous situation on the Palestinian people, on its economy and on prospects for peace. My delegation believes that a policy for defending a country's security should not

become an instrument to undermine or destroy the well-being of a nation. That is why we believe that the measures adopted by Israel, which punish the Palestinian people in the areas under the control of the Palestine National Authority, must cease.

The continued closure of Israel's borders and the borders of the West Bank and Gaza with Jordan and Egypt, as well as the maintaining of restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods in Palestinian territory, jeopardize the peace process. Likewise, the interruption of the continuity of the Palestinian territory and the imposition of restrictions on entry into East Jerusalem affect, respectively, the implementation of the agreements reached between the parties to establish a safe passage between Gaza and Jericho and the special status of the city of Jerusalem for the Palestinian people.

These measures also have a negative impact on the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, and on the distribution of food to them, who constitute the poorest segment of the Palestinian economy.

My delegation therefore appeals to the Government of Israel — for the sake of the peace process, the agreements reached between the parties and the well-being of the Palestinian people — to bring this deplorable situation to an end.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following States associated with the Union have expressed their intention to associate themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

After the appalling bombings in Israel, which killed and injured so many innocent victims and which aimed through blind violence to undermine the peace process, the European Union reaffirms its solidarity with and support for all efforts to establish a durable peace in the region.

Safeguarding the security of the Israeli and Palestinian populations is a fundamental element in implementing the peace process. In condemning the barbaric terrorist acts in Israel, we acknowledge the need to assure the safety of the Israeli population and to prevent further terrorist acts. We urge the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to cooperate closely to detain and punish those responsible.

The European Union recognizes the hardship imposed on the Palestinian population as a result of the closure by Israel, for security reasons, of all land and sea borders with Gaza and the West Bank. We wish to recall the essential role of the reconstruction assistance provided by the international community, in building up support for a peace process in the Palestinian entity almost half of which comes from the European Union.

The closure of the borders, which must be completely ended as soon as possible, is already threatening this essential interdependent work and causing suffering through lack of food supplies to the Palestinian population. We therefore call on Israel to allow humanitarian assistance and materials for the internationally financed reconstruction programmes to go through, under appropriate security safeguards but without undue delay, and to cease the imposition of collective punishment.

The peace process must be made irreversible. We urge all the parties to pursue its implementation with determination. We look to the continued implementation of the agreement concluded by the parties concerned, including the agreed timetable.

Mr. Włosowicz (Poland): Like all the other delegations of members of the Security Council that have spoken before us, the delegation of Poland is seriously concerned at the recent developments and the escalation of tension in the occupied Arab territories. These events pose a significant threat to the peace process in the Middle East, which still remains, despite considerable achievements, in its very precarious initial phase.

Others have already examined the current situation in and around the Arab territories against a broader regional and international background. We share their views.

We also believe that the peace process in the Middle East is the only feasible option for Israelis and Palestinians alike. We call upon these two nations to persevere in the determination that they have already displayed to overcome emerging problems and to continue working together, as provided for in the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993 and subsequent documents.

These were truly historic steps, demonstrating how far-sighted the leaders of both parties have been. It has been clear from the very beginning that it would take a great deal of hard work, patience and courage to

implement the agreements as they are put to the test, literally on a daily basis.

Terrorism has proved to be capable of shaking the very foundations of the peace process in the Middle East. It has brought death and suffering to innocent people. It has caused despair and has augmented the feeling of uncertainty so detrimental to the peaceful future of this land that has been so severely tested by history. The Government of Poland has condemned the recent terrorist attacks against Israel. We strongly oppose any manifestation of such conduct.

We understand and respect the Israeli Government's concerns. It has the right and, indeed, the obligation to provide security for its people. With the overall task of further advancing the peace process in the Middle East in mind, the Polish delegation sincerely hopes that the measures devised by the Israeli authorities will be commensurate with the acts of terrorism, which, after all, are committed by individuals. The majority of the Palestinian population who, we believe, support what the Israeli and Palestinian leaders have agreed upon, should not be held responsible for the crimes committed by others and left exposed to a new wave of humanitarian difficulties.

Every step that brings the Israeli and Palestinian peoples closer to fulfilling their declared common goal of living next to one another in a stable, secure and peaceful environment contributes to making violence less and less of an option for those who are not ready to rule it out yet. The economic situation of the Palestinian population is of paramount importance in that respect. We fear that the security measures instituted by the Israeli Government could obstruct the flow of the international aid pledged to the Palestinians, thus causing an additional hardship to the people who live in the area and slowing the whole peace process.

We welcome the recent decisions by the Government of Israel on easing some of the restrictions.

There will be no genuine and lasting solution to this extremely complex situation without the will and determination of both parties to achieve it. We believe that they are truly committed to what they jointly designed. It is our hope that they will refrain from undertaking any measures that could increase tension in the region, and that they will work together to overcome all the obstacles on the path to peace, stability and economic prosperity in the Middle East.

For its part, Poland will continue to work with the international community to assist the people of Israel and Palestine in their efforts to open a new chapter in their common history.

My comments represent the contribution of the Polish delegation to this debate to complement the statement delivered by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and associated countries, including my own.

Mr. Queta (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): As this is the first statement that I have made at an official meeting this month, I extend, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of Guinea-Bissau, my sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for April. We are certain that, given your skill and *savoir faire*, you will fully accomplish your difficult task. We also sincerely thank, through you, Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana for the outstanding way in which he headed the Council last month.

Guinea-Bissau considers the recent closures and restriction of movement in the zones under the Palestinian National Authority as a source of continuing concern, because of their negative repercussions for the Palestinian population. Despite claims that such steps are legitimate security measures, we believe that they are not appropriate at a time when it is the job of all parties to redouble their efforts to consolidate what has been gained and, through specific actions, to implement fully all the other aspects of the peace process, particularly those related to security in the area.

We condemn the recent acts of terrorism in Israel, which cost innocent lives. Those base acts have been condemned in all countries that seek peace and security. We welcome the convening in Egypt of the Summit conference under the co-chairmanship of President Mubarak of Egypt and President Clinton of the United States, with the participation of many Heads of State or Government, including those from countries of the Middle East. We hope that the conclusions reached by that conference will be applied in such a way as to facilitate the peace process in the region and to combat terrorism.

As the Security Council is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, it could not remain indifferent to the latest developments in the situation in the Middle East or to the suffering of the civilian population. Nevertheless, we believe that at this

stage any progress towards peace in the region will depend fundamentally upon the will of the parties concerned. We therefore encourage the parties to confront the enemies of peace and to respect existing commitments and agreements, and to continue their direct negotiations, which is the only way of reaching a just, comprehensive and lasting peace and social and economic development in the Middle East.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I thank the representative of Guinea-Bissau for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): For several weeks we have witnessed the spectacle of the people of Palestine being subjected to extraordinary measures which have rendered their lives infinitely more difficult. As the Palestinian memorandum (S/1996/235, annex) on the situation makes clear, the arbitrary closure of the occupied territories has paralysed their lives and is causing irreparable harm. In consequence, the fragility of the ongoing peace endeavours has become increasingly evident.

As part of its campaign against violence and terror, which we do not condone, Israel has resorted to a policy involving a harsh regimen of collective punishment of the residents of the West Bank and Gaza. As a result, the movement of people and goods within the occupied territories has been prohibited, as has that between the occupied territories and Israel and neighbouring countries. Consequently, economic activities have come to a virtual standstill. Furthermore, Arab Jerusalem has been placed off-limits to all residents of the West Bank and Gaza. In action reminiscent of Israel's policies and practices in the past, schools of higher learning and other educational institutions have been summarily closed and the houses of alleged perpetrators of violence have been demolished, while the expansion of settlements and confiscation of lands has continued unabated. These and other measures, including the expansion of military operations and strategic control by Israel, are in utter violation of all internationally accepted norms and principles, and represent a massive abuse of fundamental human rights. This has directly contributed to the Palestinian sense of alienation and frustration.

All of these actions have turned a new, crueller page in Palestinian-Israeli relations, and are tantamount to a policy of retribution against the entire Palestinian nation for acts committed by individuals. They are incompatible with the vision of Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation and a Palestinian nation at peace with neighbouring Israel. Ominously, they cast a shadow over the peace process.

It is paradoxical that while significant strides along the road to peace are being made, we are witnessing an exponential increase in restrictions on Palestinian access, not only within the occupied territories but to Israel. Confining Palestinians to their new, self-governing enclaves and cutting them off from the rest of the world is a recipe for heightened tension and confrontation. Yet concerted Arab efforts to call international attention to the disastrous consequences of a policy of closure have been rebuffed. Marginal compensation for the immense hardship of a sizable segment of the population would not suffice and would not create conditions conducive to building the economic infrastructure necessary for durable peace.

As heinous as the consequences of violence and terrorism are, they should not deter us from expressing our strong and unequivocal condemnation of the punishment of an entire nation. The Palestinian Authority, which itself has condemned terrorist attacks, has taken determined steps not only to apprehend the perpetrators of crimes but to maintain law and order. Reasons of security cannot therefore be invoked by Israel to justify its draconian actions.

It is self-evident that the prolonged closure and the imposition of restrictions have already caused considerable damage to the fabric of the Palestinian economy and society. They must now cease. It is therefore imperative that people and goods be allowed to move freely across the pre-1967 borders. Furthermore, the Government of Israel should be prevailed upon to observe the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention applicable to the occupied territories, and to refrain from illegal actions. Of no less importance is the scrupulous implementation of the provisions of the agreements now in effect. The future of the peace accords and their continuing support by the Palestinian people may well hinge upon Israel's actions.

The Middle East peace process faces a critical test: either it can move forward inexorably despite the setbacks or it will relapse into a dangerous phase with unknown consequences. The most viable policy at this juncture is to establish a stable political environment and to persist in building peace. The peace process leading to Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories is the only door open to coexistence and a secure future for all the countries in the region. Prolonged delays in reaching tangible gains may well erode the mutual confidence that has been assiduously built in recent times. We remain

hopeful that the peace process will prove resilient and irreversible.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Chile.

The historic peace process on which the State of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority have embarked is too important for us to allow it to be threatened. We know that it is a complex and delicate process which requires of us all an iron will not to allow it to deviate from the commitments that have been achieved. That is why we support all those who are committed to peace — that is, the vast majority. But unfortunately it is obvious that not everyone in the area seeks peace. Terrorist acts are aimed at preventing this peace process from moving forward and at taking the situation back to the bitter days of war and intolerance.

Chile condemns terrorism as a means of political action and in all circumstances. It is repugnant to note how this means was used in February when suicide bombers caused explosions which caused death and destruction, and which have led us to today's debate. The perpetrators of this and other attacks, which have affected Israel as well as Palestine, must be condemned by all States.

Hence, we understand the concern of the Government of Israel for the safety of its people. The Government of Chile has condemned these attacks in very strong terms. At the same time, however, the choice of measures to be adopted to defend the security of Israel must take account of their widespread negative impact on the daily lives of people living in the territories under the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority.

The international community must be concerned with the safety of individuals throughout the area. Ultimately, it is a matter of creating conditions in which the security of the human being, and not only of States, may become a reality for all of the inhabitants of the region wherever they may be. The security of the human being is greatly affected in the Palestinian territories by the drastic interruption in access to jobs, freedom of movement, imports, exports and normal ties with Israel and the rest of the world.

Information the Security Council has received from the Secretariat points to the serious effects which the closure of the borders of the Palestinian territories is having.

We are therefore faced with a humanitarian and political situation which we cannot ignore and which must be resolved as soon as possible, thus making security a reality for all. In this context, we consider it essential to speed up the initial measures adopted by Israel to ease the situation of the Palestinian population. It is not possible to implement security measures which in fact constitute collective punishment of innocent people. It seems to us that the border must be reopened now in a manner consistent with the situation and that the other measures be reconsidered.

The international community must not allow any group to use violence and terror as a means of imposing its views.

We express our solidarity with the Palestinian people in its suffering, and with the families of the victims of the attacks in Israel.

We appeal to all parties in that region which is so dear to us all. Palestinians and Israelis alike must do everything necessary to overcome the difficulties they are now facing and those they will face in the future as part of this difficult peace process which the entire world follows with admiration and hope.

I resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker is the representative of the United Arab Emirates. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is an honour for me, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates and in my capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for this month, to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. There is no doubt that your experience and diplomatic skill will help the Council achieve positive results.

We would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, for the effective and able manner in which he guided the work of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting today at the request of the Arab Group, which has always emphasized its support for the peace process in accordance with legitimate international resolutions, in particular Security

Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), to discuss the situation in the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, including Holy Jerusalem. This marks clear international recognition of the seriousness of the humanitarian, security, economic and social situation the Palestinian people are undergoing as a result of continuing Israeli Government acts of oppression, displacement, occupation, starvation and confiscation of land. These acts are carried out without regard to the seriousness of this policy or to international commitments stemming from the series of peace agreements concluded with the Palestinian Authority over the last three years. This policy heightens our doubts and those of the international community regarding Israel's expressed intentions with respect to the peace process as a whole. It also runs counter to the new world effort to put an end to occupation and wars and to achieve the peaceful settlement of disputes on the basis of the United Nations Charter and the norms of international law.

Since late February, the Israeli occupation forces have forged a tight chain of siege and closure around the areas and cities of the West Bank and the Gaza sector, which are regarded as a single unit under the 1993 Declaration of Principles and have paralysed the movements of the Arab population to and from their cities and places of work, including holy Jerusalem. This has led to worsening hunger, poverty and unemployment, and to disease and despair.

This also runs counter to the most basic norms of international humanitarian law. Our disappointment is increased by the Israeli Government's recent reimposition of military occupation in certain areas from which it had already withdrawn. It has also failed to observe its commitments to withdraw from the Arab city of Hebron. This is in addition to freezing the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of negotiations and its deliberate attempts to obstruct the final stage of negotiations on the Palestinian track, by which it reneged on its pledges regarding the peace process.

These illegal Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel's recent acts of aggression against Lebanon — the bombing of villages and cities, including Beirut, and threats to the civilian population — represent a clear violation of all agreements and pacts on the international level. They also lead to a situation of instability and lack of security, which threatens the peace process and the Middle East as a whole.

The current situation requires the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and immediately respond by bringing pressure to bear on the Israeli Government in order to prompt it to observe and respect the resolutions of international legitimacy and to implement fully its commitment to the peace process. This is a pressing need and a prerequisite not only for the countries and peoples of the region but for the countries and peoples of the world at large.

Israel's behaviour in taking measures of collective punishment against the Palestinian people threatens the continuation of the peace process. It does not contribute to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to peace and coexistence between the countries of the region. It reverts to the atmosphere of war and conflict, the most recent examples of which are the acts of aggression by Israel against the Lebanese territories, which we reject. These confirmed once again the need to resume negotiations in order to avoid wasting vast financial and human resources, that could be used to achieve social and economic development in the region.

Israel must deal with the new regional and international realities, which call for the withdrawal of its forces from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, including the city of Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). This would represent genuine support for a confidence-building process between the countries of the region, in order to achieve the aspirations of its peoples to a comprehensive, durable and just peace.

The question of security is the real concern of all the countries of the region, not only of Israel. The region is threatened not only by the manifestations of violence and tension but also by the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, because of the seriousness of these weapons and their potential threat to the environment and to health. Israel's remaining outside the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its refusal so far to subject its nuclear weapons to the inspection and safeguard system of the International Atomic Energy Agency represents a continued challenge to peace and international and regional security and detracts from the credibility and universality of the NPT. The international community, represented by the Security Council, must call on the Israeli Government to accede to the Treaty in a way that is in consonance with the peace process. We

also reiterate our call to declare the Middle East a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

In the face of these serious challenges to the peace process, we call upon the Security Council to take effective and practical measures that would ensure the realization of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people; the cessation of the policy of aggression, settlement and Judaization of Jerusalem; the preservation of its cultural, religious and material heritage, and demographic composition; and the lifting of the siege against the Palestinian villages and cities.

At the same time, we call upon the Security Council to adopt a resolution calling upon Israel to desist from all these practices and to return to peaceful negotiations on all tracks, based on the relevant decisions of international legitimacy — particularly to the beginning of the negotiations on the final stage of the Palestinian track, in order to agree on the questions of Jerusalem, refugees, borders and settlements, and to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate rights, the foremost of which are their rights to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent capital in Jerusalem.

I would also call upon the international community, especially donor countries, to provide economic support and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people to improve their living conditions and to develop a comprehensive infrastructure, in order to realize its aspiration to a decent life, like all other peoples of the world.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of the United Arab Emirates for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Kuwait. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of Kuwait is very pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the work of the Security Council for this month. Your competence and experience guarantee that the Security Council's work will be crowned with success. I should like also to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Legwaila, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, for the outstanding manner in which he directed the work of the Council last month.

The Council is meeting today to consider the critical situation in the Palestinian territories resulting from the arbitrary measures and practices and inhuman treatment that the Israeli occupying authorities have resorted to against the people of Palestine in the occupied territories. Apart from the fact that the Israeli Government has continued to pursue its policy of confiscating lands, expanding its settlements and demolishing houses, as well as other arbitrary practices, other steps have recently been taken, and they can be summarized as follows.

They have imposed restrictions on freedom of movement in the Palestinian territories and have effected the closure of certain zones in order to make it impossible for people to move between Palestinian villages and towns. They have also split the Palestinian territory, preventing Palestinians from reaching the city of Jerusalem. They have closed the Israeli border to Palestinians and their goods from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and have prevented the entrance of Israeli goods into Palestinian territory, which has greatly harmed the Palestinian economy and caused suffering to large sectors of the population of the territory.

These measures are a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and of all other agreements, instruments, and international norms. They represent a sharp reversal by Israel, which has gone back on the agreements concluded at Oslo and Cairo as part of the peace process that started at Madrid in 1991. That the Israeli authorities continue these practices damages the entire peace process and creates tension and instability throughout the region.

In view of its solidarity with the Palestinian people and its desire successfully to continue the peace process in the Middle East, Kuwait is profoundly concerned at the inhuman practices engaged in by the Israeli authorities, and requests the Security Council to demand that Israel immediately cease these policies of collective punishment, which they have unjustifiably claimed are simply for security reasons and have resulted in the blockading of the autonomous areas. We call upon them to respect their agreements with the Palestinians and to continue negotiations on a final agreement, which will make it possible for the Palestinian people to fully exercise their rights and will put an end to aggression and occupation, leading to the exercise of these legitimate rights, first and foremost the right to self-determination and to the establishment of their own independent State, with the holy city of Jerusalem as its capital.

Kuwait welcomed the agreement between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to extend autonomy as an important step towards full implementation of all aspects of the Oslo Agreement. Kuwait reaffirms that peace can be lasting and comprehensive only if all aspects of it are carried out. Therefore, we emphasize the need to make progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. We also call upon Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in Lebanon and to place them once again under the control of the Lebanese Government.

Kuwait's participation in the Sharm El Sheikh Summit, which was held last month in the Arab Republic of Egypt, underscored our conviction that it is vital to give further momentum to the peace process and to make progress towards creating appropriate conditions for overcoming the obstacles to the peace which is so earnestly desired, and towards finding ways to combat terrorism, whatever its origin, and completely uprooting it from the region. What is essential now is to resume the peace process on all fronts to reach a formula that will make that peace just and comprehensive.

In conclusion, I appeal to all parties concerned to continue the peace process and to achieve progress with it, rather than taking action that makes us lose the momentum we have gained in recent years and which we hope will continue. I appeal to them also to make our dream come true: that peace may be restored to the Middle East.

We appeal to the international community to continue its support to the Palestinian people to enable them to rebuild their economic infrastructure, and to donor countries to give them the continuous material support they need. We were the first country to give such support to the Palestinian people through the various international bodies and institutions. We express satisfaction at the agreements reached between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government as part of the peace process.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I thank the representative of Kuwait for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Lebanon. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I am delighted, Sir, to express our pleasure at seeing you presiding over the Security Council this month. We are fully aware of your wisdom and your broad knowledge, as well as of your country's commitment to the cause of peace. We are therefore convinced that you will lead the Council very effectively.

The Security Council is once again considering a situation that some in the international community had believed was on the road to settlement. A sector of public opinion applauded the scenes on their television screens — the scenes of celebration that accompanied the signing of preliminary agreements between some parties to the conflict. We had always been among those who sincerely hoped that one day we would all celebrate a just, lasting and comprehensive peace; the day when we would all stand together to applaud a bright future for all our children.

However, we sadly warned not only that any partial measure would be doomed, but that its failure would have serious repercussions for the future of peace because it would lead to the frustration of public opinion and the entrenchment of the language of despair, which usually turns into acts of violence and tragedies for civilians. On that basis we stated the need to continue these endeavours on the basis and principles to which we all agreed in Madrid. We considered that it would be necessary for Israelis to stop dreaming of an Eretz Israel, and to stop believing that security could come before peace. We stressed that peace entrenches security; not the contrary. We said that a genuine peace is a peace that, based on the resolutions of international legitimacy, would respect the legitimate rights of all the peoples of the region, including the Palestinian people, a people which has suffered for many long years. They have suffered occupation, repression, dispersal; they have sought to establish their homeland, a homeland that would give them the identity necessary to join the international community, to practice and enjoy their natural human rights and to have civilized interaction with others.

Today we witness the fruits of partial measures. Despair generates violence; violence attracts violence; and here we are once again in a vicious circle of violence. Violence has spread from the occupied Palestinian territories to southern Lebanon to the western Bekaa; indeed, to the suburbs of Beirut. The number of civilian casualties is rising, and instead of meeting to hail the results of the Madrid process and the return to the path of true peace, the Security Council is here because the drums of war are beating again — the drums of the Israeli military machine bombarding from land, sea and

air, destroying dozens of Lebanese villages and towns, causing dozens of civilian casualties and displacing thousands of women and children.

We see the Palestinians protesting against the Israeli policy of siege, the security cordon imposed on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the reoccupation of regions from which Israeli forces had withdrawn. They believe that the cordon and the closure constitute a declaration of war against the Palestinian people.

The Israeli Prime Minister, a Nobel Prize winner, decided to take off the garment of peace and put on his boxing gloves. He honestly declared that he would not accept peace at the expense of security in his country. He wanted to send a message to the Israeli electorate to convince it that peace would come only on the terms it desired. If the others accept, fine; if they refuse, the alternative is the Israeli military machine. And we are wondering if such logic can serve the cause of peace?

For a few weeks now, Israeli forces have been engaging in collective punishment against Palestinian inhabitants inside the occupied Palestinian territories. Such measures, which come on top of the total closure of the territory, have included the demolition of civilian homes after the forcible eviction of their inhabitants. Israel claims that those homes belonged to families of those who perpetrated suicide acts in Israel or those who sympathize with them. Such punitive measures go against all modern civilized norms. We wonder what law, what logic, what moral values can justify such punishments. We believe that nowhere in the world, with the exception of Israel, can such punishment be imposed.

Israel has also practised policies of the annexing land, the expanding settlements and restricting the economic and human activities of the inhabitants. We have all heard about children and other innocent civilians who have met their death because they did not have enough medicine or medical care. We have seen television pictures, however brief or limited, showing the terrible condition of civilians. Now the picture is completed by the scenes of hundreds of thousands of innocent Lebanese citizens facing continuing bombardment and forcible displacement. Statistics from yesterday and today show that more than 300,000 citizens, in response to threats, warnings and Israeli bombardments, have had to leave their homes and their villages. Most of the villages in the south and the western Bekaa stand empty. Israel has made threats against the civilians living in Tyre, on the coast — a city of 300,000 people. There are genuine fears of another collective exodus. Israel continues to blockade the entire Lebanese coast and to bombard the coastal roads, usually aiming at civilian vehicles and ambulances.

We recently witnessed the bombing of an ambulance, killing four children. If those children had happened to be Israeli, one wonders what the reaction of the world would have been, and especially that of some permanent members of the Security Council.

We have seen the bombardment of homes by the Israeli Air Force. One such raid totally demolished a home, bringing it down on the heads of its inhabitants, and an entire family met its death. The bombardment has also been striking civilian infrastructure, such as electrical plants. The Israeli operations in Lebanon have led to the deaths of more than 50 civilians and dozens have been wounded. Hundreds of homes have been destroyed, as have hospitals and houses of worship. Such operations, added to Israel's continuing operations against inhabitants of the Palestinian occupied territories, threaten international peace and security and all possible foundations of peace in the future. They lead only to further hatred, violence and tension among the peoples of the region.

This has been going on for decades. It has not and will not lead to a solution; it will only lead to tragedy for all. Such policies are in flagrant violation of human rights, international law and the United Nations Charter. They are a clear challenge to civilized society, and they show that Israel continues to disregard the United Nations and the collective security system. They also confirm that the rulers of Tel Aviv do not have any respect for the Security Council and behave as if they were above the law.

It is my duty to mention in my statement the situation in Lebanon because we see a common Israeli pattern in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Lebanon. However, I shall reserve the details pertaining to the situation in Lebanon for the meeting in which the Security Council considers the question of Lebanon.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Lebanon for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Bjørn Lian (Norway): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, upon your assumption of the presidency for the month of April. It is indeed a pleasure to see you presiding over this important meeting. Allow

me also to congratulate the Permanent Representative of Botswana, Ambassador Legwaila, for the excellent manner in which he carried out his duties last month.

The peace process in the Middle East is in a fragile and critical state. The Israeli and Palestinian authorities are concentrating their efforts on the fight against terrorism. Significant achievements have been made so far in this regard.

In the meantime, however, the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank is experiencing severe economic difficulties. The continuation of the peace process between the Israelis and Palestinians now depends, more than ever, on unequivocal international support. We must demonstrate to the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, in deeds as well as in words, that we are fully behind them, and behind the peace process between them. To these ends the international community must act swiftly along two tracks, both of which are equally important and mutually supportive of what we are all trying to achieve.

First, we should coordinate our efforts to fight terrorism in the Middle East and worldwide. The Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm El Sheikh earlier this month and the coming ministerial meeting in Luxembourg constitute the framework for international coordination and cooperation on counter-terrorism. Terrorism should not be allowed to stop the peace process. We must ensure that the clear message from the Summit of Peacemakers is fully implemented and is amplified in its practical implementation.

Secondly, it is now vital that the donor community help mitigate the effects of the border closure on the Palestinian economy and society. In its capacity as chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the purpose of which is to coordinate aid for Gaza and the West Bank, Norway called for an emergency meeting of that Committee in Brussels on 12 April. The meeting was devoted entirely to issues pertaining to economic assistance to the Palestinians. On the basis of reports presented at that meeting, the following ideas should be highlighted.

Additional financial support to cover the deepening budget deficit is urgently needed. We ask donors to pay their pledges to the Holst Fund without delay.

We also ask donors to fund new, small and dispersed projects that can create immediate employment and to direct unallocated resources to such projects as soon as possible.

Pledges from the Paris conference of 9 January 1996 should be fulfilled as soon as possible. Projects already under way should have accelerated implementation.

Some improvements in the transport of goods into and out of the Palestinian areas have taken place. The number of Palestinians allowed into Israel to work is slowly picking up. We hope these developments will continue, as they are of the highest importance for a substantial improvement in the Palestinian economy.

No one thought in 1993 that the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians would be easy. Let us therefore not forget what the peace process has achieved so far; let us look forward and beyond the current crisis in order to protect and carry through the peace process.

Since I do not plan to speak later today, allow me a brief, final word.

Norway is deeply concerned about the present escalation in Lebanon, which has led to civilian casualties and large migration flows away from the battle zone. We urge the parties to stop the spiral of violence and to conclude an immediate cease-fire, so as to avoid further harm to civilians and to enable the resumption of peace negotiations in the region.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish):* I thank the representative of Norway for his kind words addressed to me.

There are a number of speakers remaining. In view of the lateness of the hour, and with the concurrence of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 1.35 p.m.